

GMB SafeGuard BRIEFING



GMB in the Security Industry

GMB is the union for workers in the Security Industry. Thousands of GMB members are employed throughout the industry. Whether in Cash and Valuables in Transit (CVIT), as Security Officers, Door Supervisors, Monitoring, Patrol and Response or Aviation Agents, GMB members provide a professional and high quality service.

The strength of our membership means that GMB has been at the forefront of campaigns and activities to improve the security industry. GMB strongly influenced the introduction of the legislation on compulsory licensing, and was closely involved with developing the SIA licensing regime that was then established.

GMB members in the industry continue to influence their employers and other stakeholders in an effort to raise standards, reduce health and safety risks, improve training and provide decent career opportunities. GMB's aim is to make the security industry a safer and better place to work, with pay and conditions that reflect the professional standards that our security officer members deliver.

What is SafeGuard?

SafeGuard is a new campaign being launched by GMB members working in the security sector. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the rising levels of abuse and violence against security officers and to demand a commitment by employers in the industry to take action.

GMB members working in the security sector have reported a worrying increase in both the number of attacks and the level of violence against security officers in recent times. Even those who haven't been directly subjected to attack themselves are aware of the constant threat of violence and are concerned about what the future might hold if they are injured at work.

GMB have not found any evidence that robust or official data on attacks against security officers is collated or analysed across the industry. However, figures obtained by GMB suggest that our members' concerns over the level of attacks are justified. In the last 2 years, there were over 1550 security officers injured on duty within only 35 of the 600+ security companies that are members of the Approved Contractor Scheme (ACS).

Those figures show why GMB security members decided to launch a campaign of action against the problem of violent attacks against security officers. The aim of GMB members is to engage with the industry and their own employers to promote best practice, demand action to reduce the risk of attacks taking place, and to ensure that all security officers are supported emotionally, professionally and financially should they be subjected to violent attacks whilst carrying out their duties.

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Violence against Security Workers

GMB security members want to see all employers and clients in the industry committed to zero tolerance on abuse, violence and attacks. Security officers understand that there is a risk of violence attached to the work that they carry out. What they will not accept is that violent attacks against them must be simply tolerated as “part of the job”.

In common with all employers, security companies have legal obligations to comply with health and safety regulations. These obligations include assessing the risk of violence to their security officers, taking reasonably practicable steps to reduce the risk of violence occurring, and working in conjunction with their clients and customers to implement measures to protect security officers at their place of work.

Many security industry employers need to drastically step up their efforts to protect their officers. Signing up to GMB’s SafeGuard Charter (see below) is the first step towards developing an action plan, in conjunction with GMB workforce representatives, to implement measures to tackle violence against security officers.

There are also vast improvements needed in the way that information and statistics on violence against security officers is collected and recorded. For example, the 2009 British Retail Consortium crime survey recorded a doubling of violence against retail staff on the previous year, with at least 22,000 staff in the sector suffering physical or verbal attacks or threats over the course of the year. We have no comparable data on how many security officers were involved in similar incidents, but given the nature of their job, and the high numbers employed on security contracts within the retail sector, it begs the question – why isn’t this type of data available on violence against security officers?

Support following an attack

All employers have a duty of care towards their employees. Unfortunately, the experience of GMB members working in the security industry is that there is often a widespread failure to exercise that duty of care to officers who have been injured in attacks whilst carrying out their duties.

The GMB case studies show that too many security companies have a woefully inadequate response to injured employees. In addition to dealing with the trauma and any physical injuries suffered, many security workers have found themselves effectively abandoned by their employer in the aftermath of an attack. GMB believes that employers in the industry need to do a great deal more to provide post-incident support to security officers injured in attacks. Injured security officers should receive immediate welfare support and access to counselling, in addition to knowing that their income is protected and that they will not suffer financially.

The case studies show that the sole source of any assistance and advice provided to many security guards injured in attacks has been GMB representatives working in the industry. Injured officers, often having little contact from their companies following the attack, and with their wages stopped, have received their only emotional support, financial assistance and legal advice through their union representative. Without the support of fellow members and GMB union activists, these security officers would have suffered even worse hardship, simply for doing their job.

This is the unacceptable face of the security industry, and GMB members are determined to persuade security companies to treat officers who have been attacked whilst in their employment with a greater degree of humanity and respect

The SafeGuard Charter

At the centre of the GMB campaign members are calling for security industry employers, clients, customers' industry trade associations and others, to sign up to the SafeGuard Charter and make a firm commitment to implement the Charter's demands.

SafeGuard aims to raise safety and industry standards, improve employment practices, and increase training and awareness across the industry. Security officers want the highly valuable and professional service that they deliver to be recognised, and they want to be treated with dignity and respect.

GMB members therefore call upon the security industry employers, clients, trade associations and others to sign up to the commitments enshrined in the SafeGuard Charter to:

- Work together to reduce attacks across the industry
- provide support and counselling for trauma and physical injuries
- protect injured officers financially through sick pay and injury-on-duty (IoD) schemes
- provide robust high quality training in conflict management
- establish an industry level Code of Practice that focuses on reducing risk to security officers
- record and analyse data on attacks across the security industry, and to work with the police authorities to reduce the risk of crime and violent attacks
- use technology to enhance safety and support for security officers

GMB's security members want dignity for themselves as individuals, and respect for the professional job that they undertake, and this cannot be achieved unless security workers are valued and supported by the basic, but important, principles and practices outlined in the SafeGuard Charter.

Support GMB's SafeGuard campaign

Whether you are a security industry employer, a trade association, a stakeholder or client in the security industry, your support for GMB's SafeGuard Campaign is vital.

First and foremost, GMB security members are seeking your pledge of support for the SafeGuard Charter.

Signing the Charter is making a firm commitment to actively engage with GMB members in the security industry to promote and develop the principles and good practice that their SafeGuard Charter seeks to deliver.

GMB members say its time for employers and clients to act, to reduce the violence against security officers, to raise standards, to put dignity and respect and zero tolerance at the heart of service delivery. Every attack is a crime against the person and the industry need to send a clear message out that this will not be tolerated. Security officers provide vital services, and they need to know they will be protected and that the industry is seriously committed to reducing the level of violence against them.

Adopting best practice from the CVIT industry

GMB members are rightfully proud of their achievements in helping to reduce attacks and violent crime against personnel in the CVIT sector of the security industry. GMB has led the way on the campaign against CVIT attacks, working closely with the Home Office, BSIA, BRC, Safer Cash, Vanguard and the Police Authorities.

GMB members working in CVIT launched their campaign against violent attacks six years ago, and have since worked tirelessly with their employers and other bodies to ensure action has been taken to give better protection to employees in the industry. As a result of this joint working, there is now a greater focus on the measures that can be taken to reduce the level of attacks, and to support employees who are injured or traumatised as a result of those that do still occur.

The CVIT sector now has well-established practices and procedures on violent attacks and their aftermath, but in the security sector it is a very different story. GMB members are asking: if CVIT employees can be provided with the support and assistance we would expect from their employer, including decent sick pay schemes and injury-on-duty benefits, why are these so sadly lacking for security officers?